

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA ✦ APRIL 25TH-28TH



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A CONFERENCE OF  
PROBLEMATIC  
FRAGMENTATION

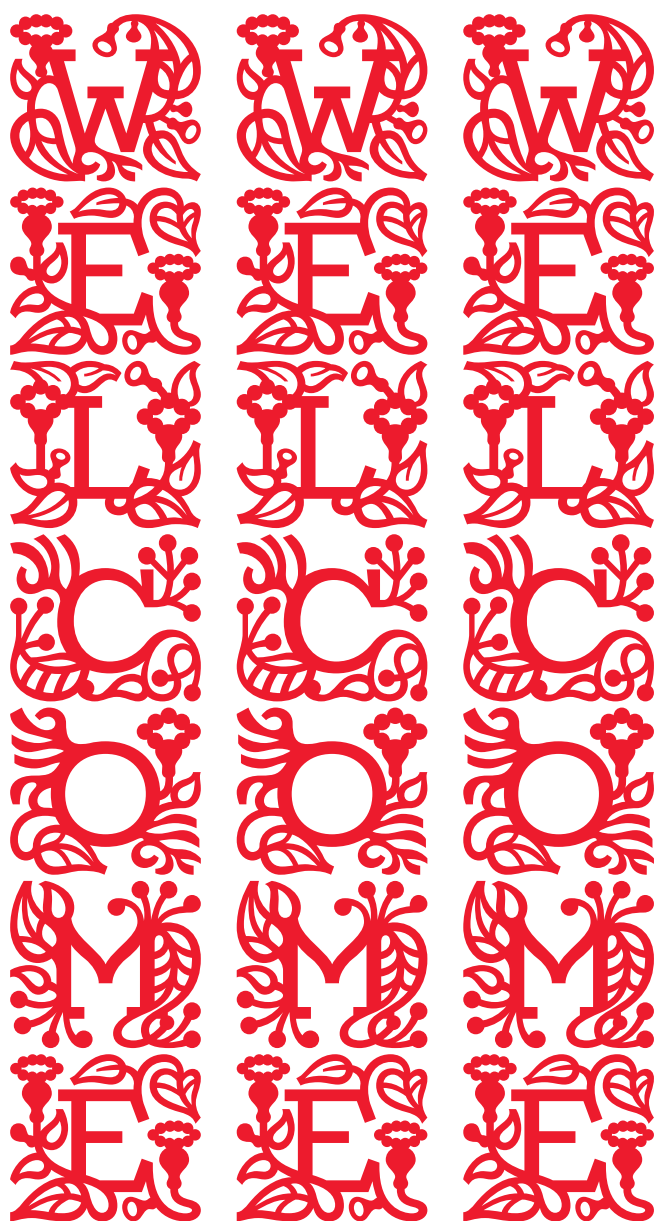
*Presented by The Warren social  
center, in partnership with the  
prison abolition group Focus  
Initiative, and the worker  
co-op Autonomous Spaces.*





"These experiences lend themselves to a means of preparation for a more epic resistance movement."

CEDRIC ROBINSON



# Statelessness: A Conference of Problematic Fragmentation



AS CLIMATE CHANGE RENDERS REGIONS UNINHABITABLE and imperialism redraws borders, statelessness increases as a condition experienced by more and more people. In her book *Statelessness and Contemporary Enslavement* (Routledge, 2020), Gordon defines this condition as the degree to which “the concrete value of political membership is eroded” by economic forces that are “fundamentally antagonistic to the protection of uniquely political forms of belonging” (pp. 2& 19). The same dynamics that produce the crises of ecological catastrophe and population displacement also normalize the disappearance of legal representation for ever more categories of people: immigrant, Indigenous, transgender, Black, women, etc.

This will be the inaugural event for The Warren. The social center was built in 1909, and its intensive rehabilitation has involved a meditation on what Tony C. Brown describes in his book on the philosophical project of state ontology as “barely being at all,” with “no end in the sense of purpose or necessity... occasioning a torsional deforming.” *Statelessness: on almost not existing*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2022). The building was deconstructed, and much of it was demolished with careful attention to the uncertain tensions of contingent assemblages. What tensions and contingencies keep the state structure from collapsing? What corresponding pressures and discontinuations reconfigure revolutionary arrangements? The conference will concentrate on conditions of unsettling resemblances in which revolutionaries and revolutionary conditions look much like crisis, loss, capture, and retreat.

American radicals often fail to recognize the decisive role of minor national, ethnic, and regional conflicts because of a colonial expectation and “undifferentiated generalities”: a failure to see the proliferation of revolutionary potentials because liberation is defined in limited terms that colonize the horizons of revolution. This dissonance is pronounced in the contrasting statements “Other worlds are possible” and “Other worlds are here”. As we close the aperture of our focus around what is “possible” we lose sight of the “less abstract and more tactile” that is “here” stepping unprepared into much more complex, disorienting, and dangerous realities.

In Achille Mbembe’s *Necropolitics* (Duke University Press, 2019) he gives us this description, that the routes of statelessness “can only be traced as a spiral transgression of that difference that disorients the very idea of the limit” and winds through a state of confusion. The conference will be an exploration of the disorientation of statelessness as a revolutionary terrain to map out terms of order; from the quotidian non-hierarchy of communal kitchens, the ethereal formation of potentiality in the aesthetics of painting, to membership in historical revolutionary groups and the dismemberment in exile and imprisonment.

Multiplicity is liminal and transition from one condition to another can be imperceptible or intolerable. State formation has historically been an assault of intolerance. The advent of racialization, capital transfiguration, digital virtual representation, and even anatomical categorization have all acted in concert to separate as much as connect—even then, often the contact that is made is in the confines of a collective experience that is excruciating and lonely. The crux of our problem is ethical, it is how we are together and not simply the moral obligation that we be together nor that in being together we are a-being-instated. Or, rather, the object of our togetherness is formed by its force. The State fails to contain the force of our being together. We will engage in discussion of the directions of the flow of this force rather than the utopian and idealist shapes of its containment.



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## Intros

5 PM Introduction

6 - 8 PM

American/New World chattel slavery as a form of statelessness; deprivation of civil rights and mass imprisonment as continuing slavery by the state; and new forms of oppression today.

LORENZO KOM'BOA ERVIN

*"This is a personal and political history by myself as a Black activist, political prisoner, and Anarchist."*

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin is an American writer, activist and black anarchist. He is a former member of SNCC, the Black Panther Party and Concerned Citizens for Justice. Following an attempt to frame him on weapons charges and for threatening the life of a Ku Klux Klan leader, Ervin hijacked a plane to Cuba in February 1969. While in Cuba, and later Czechoslovakia, Ervin grew disillusioned with the authoritarianism of state socialism. Captured by the CIA in Eastern Europe, he was extradited to the US, put on trial and sentenced to life in prison in 1970. He was introduced to anarchism whilst in prison, inspiring him to write *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* in 1979. Released after 15 years, Ervin remains politically active.

9 - 10 PM

## Talismanic Magic Against History

A.

“As a revolutionary, I am always attempting to escape from the objective prison that is history. As I have aged and grown and lived through events that have become historical, it has become more and more obvious and important to me to attempt to learn ways that revolutionaries can tell stories, myths and narratives of these liberatory ruptures that are as complex, vibrant and fluid as the events that inspire them. Talismanic Magic Against History is a collection of objects from moments in recent history where humans have ruptured from the social contract we are held under in this capitalist, statist nightmare. This project is an experiment in the practice of telling stories. How can we use talismanic magic as a pathway to escape the calcified narrative of history?”

I was born and raised in Southern Appalachia, and was lucky enough to catch the tail end of some of the great story tellers. The old ones who left the hollers to come into town and speak at the public library. Weaving stories and yarns that changed every time you heard them, carried so many truths and lies within them that that distinction blurred until unrecognizable. I learned at a young age our stories don't have to be factual to tell what is true. As I became older I found myself deep in the struggle against fascism and white supremacy, and could see the danger of a rigid story attached to an identity or a people. But also storytelling and mythology are such a deep part of what makes us humans, and telling stories is such a crucial part of a liberatory movement and practice.

My project is a drop in the bucket of the experiments in what it is to have collective memory, or collective narrative that as fluid as possible and detached from the objectivity of history or a prescribed ideology.”



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10 - 11 AM

## Emergent organizing models for our survival: The Autonomous Kitchen Council.

ABUNDIA ALVARADO

A presentation on the Autonomous Kitchen Council (AKC) organizing model. The presentation touches on the origins and context where the AKC was conceived, what is an AKC and how people go about starting their own AKC. Presentation will be followed by a 20-minute Q&A / conversation.

Abundia Alvarado (she/her) is a Nahuatl-Apache [naa-Waa-tul Ah-pah-che] Trans femme migrant from Tenochtitlan [Teh-no-cheet-lan]. Abundia co-found the Atlanta agriculturalist collective Mariposas Rebeldes in so called Atlanta in 2020. She is a member of the Tierra Comida Libertad collective and currently she is working on rolling out the Autonomous Kitchen Council model. She is also part of the movement to Stop Cop City and save the Weelaunee forest (Wee-law-nee) from destruction.

11 - 12 PM      Lunch

12 - 1 PM

## Statelessness and the Struggle to Survive in Contemporary Zomia

WU QIN AND MAX AUSTIN

In this presentation, we introduce stories from a few of the diverse populations living in Mae Sot, a town on the Thai-Myanmar border in the region sometimes known as “Zomia.” Following the latest coup in 2021, exiled Burmese revolutionaries began arriving in Mae Sot, seeking refuge without legal status while continuing to take part in the revolution. Arriving a few years earlier were Chinese mafias, who exploited the governance vacuum created by such conflicts to establish bases for the telecom scam industry.



Mae Sot became a key transport hub, facilitating movement into Karen State, where scamming compounds were set up along the border. These operations have imported workers from as far as India and Ethiopia, many being deceived into the jobs and trafficked across the border. These two vastly different groups share a common infrastructure for “escaping governance” here, both virtual and physical.

Historically, Mae Sot has long been one of the first stops for refugees fleeing the endless turmoil in Myanmar. Ever since Myanmar achieved independence from the British Empire in 1948 (as the Union of Burma), the federation’s Karen State, across the border from Mae Sot, has been in a constant state of war. This has displaced many refugees, alongside rebel forces who move between Mae Sot and the war zone in the jungles. Following the anti-Muslim riots and policies of systematic discrimination in Myanmar, Muslim refugees also started arriving, forming settlements connected to transnational trade. The mass protest movements of 1988 and 2007 also brought in dissidents from Myanmar’s other states and ethnic groups.

Interviewees from some of these cohorts told their stories to one of the presenters during several visits since 2023. We focus on their experiences of statelessness, economic compulsion, and political subjectivity in relation to recent events in the region, and to ongoing trends in global capitalism. Although their conditions are bleak and their class composition highly fragmented, many of the interviewees maintain hope and have been engaged in some form of collective struggle to improve their lives. We try to delineate that horizon and identify any lessons it might offer for the pro-revolutionary left in other countries, where the same planetary forces wreak havoc in apparently different ways.

Qin is an anarchist activist and writer from China, currently based between Thailand and Germany; Max is a communist from the US, currently working as a translator in Nashville.



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2 - 3 PM

## Contemporary Fascism and Trans Panic

CAROLINE

A presentation of preliminary research regarding the global prevalence of transphobia and anti-transness in neo-fascist politics, from Milei to Putin to Trump. Special attention will be paid to the US context. We will conclude with discussion of social revolutionary strategic orientations for real queer liberation. Caroline is a communist living in the southern US.

4 - 5 PM

## Isit/Here: Haitians without a state

EVANSVILLE RESIDENTS

This presentation will involve conversation with Evansville residents some of whom are Haitian immigrants. We will discuss versions of “stateless” forms of Haitian culture, the state of a contemporary stateless Haiti, and practices of solidarity within the local diaspora and their anarchist neighbors.

5 - 6 PM

Dinner

6 - 8 PM

Keynote Speaker

## Statelessness and Contemporary Slavery

JANE GORDON

This presentation will consist of the substance of the book, of the same title, authored by the presenter.

Why have statelessness and contemporary enslavement become endemic since the 1990s? What is it about global political economic policies, protracted warfare, and migration rules and patterns that have so systemically increased these

extreme forms of vulnerability? Why have intellectual communities largely ignored or fundamentally rejected the concepts of statelessness and contemporary enslavement? Statelessness and enslavement are not aberrations or radical exceptions. They have been and are endemic to Euromodern state systems. While victims are discrete outcomes of similar processes of the racialized debasement of citizenship, stateless people share the predicament of those most likely to be enslaved and the enslaved, even when formally free, often face situations of statelessness. Forcible inclusion of semi-sovereign nations, extralegal expulsion of people who cannot be repatriated, and the concentrated erosion of the rights of full-fledged citizens as the primary modes through which people experience degrees of statelessness. There are political value of seeing the connections among these discrete forms.

With enslavement, while the centuries-long practice has taken on some new guises necessary to its profitability in the current global economy, what and who it involves have remained remarkably consistent. Rather than focusing on slavery as a radical and exceptional extreme of abuse or coercion, we can understand contemporary slavery's specificity most usefully through considering its defining dimensions together with those of wage laborers and guest workers. In conclusion, an appreciation of the situation of the stateless and of the enslaved should fundamentally orient our thinking about viable contemporary conceptions of consent and of the kinds of twenty-first-century political institutions that would make it harder for some to make the vulnerability of others so lucrative.

Jane Anna Gordon teaches and directs the graduate program in Political Science at the University of Connecticut, USA. She is, most recently, author of *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Frantz Fanon* and co-editor (with Dracilla Cornell) of the forthcoming *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*. She was President of the Caribbean Philosophical Association from 2013 to 2016. Gordon co-edits the *Creolizing the Canon* and *Global Critical Caribbean Thought* book series.



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8:30 - 11 PM

## Film Screening: Belki Sibe (2023)

ALEXIS DALOUMIS

Belki Sibe is a volunteer soldier's film. It unfolds an 18 month journey through war and revolution, in Rojava Kurdistan NE Syria, during the advance and victory of the Syrian Democratic Forces against ISIS, including the story of the International Freedom Battalion, where the director was primarily deployed. It depicts the military life and battles on the front-lines, as well as the civil life at the rear and the social transformation attempted by the Autonomous Administration. In both fields, the role of women's liberation and empowerment is prominent. The film follows a timeline from July 2016 (battle of Manbij) until the end of 2017 (liberation of Raqqa and demise of the Islamic Caliphate), but also includes flash forward updates from late 2021, at the end of each chapter. In Belki Sibê there is no main character that drives the narrative. Instead, there is a plurality of voices from a multitude of places, that merge to form a synthesis of collective narrative, from the points of view of internationalists as well as locals. Directed by: Alexis Daloumis

Alexis Daloumis is a filmmaker and journalist of British and Greek citizenship, born in London but raised and based in Athens. Primarily orientated towards social movements, environmental issues, and conflict zones. He has also worked as a gardener, a Greek language tutor, an actor, a waiter, and a soldier. He studied film, video, photography, and new media at Westminster University and Theatre Studies at the University of Athens.

Q&A via internet, with the director after the film.

A FILM BY ALEXIS DALOUMIS

# BELKÎ SIBÊ

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SYRIAN WAR  
AND  
THE ROJAVA REVOLUTION



ALEXIS DALOUMIS PRODUCTIONS PRESENT BELKÎ SIBÊ CHEF DEVRİM BÖTAN, EKİN CEREN, MAHİR BAKIRCIYAN, KOSTİS RUZGAR AND OTHERS MUSIC BY  
ALEXANDROS MIARIS EDITOR LUISE BURCHARD AND YIANNIS KOLOZIS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALEXIS DALOUMIS WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ALEXIS DALOUMIS



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10 - 11 AM

## The Digital Infrastructure of Contemporary Fascism

MICHAEL TRUSCELLO

This talk will examine some of the recent theories for describing how the Internet intersects with emerging forms of contemporary fascism, including “technofascism,” “technofeudalism,” and “technocolonialism.”

Michael Truscello is a Professor in English and General Education at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta. He is the author of *Infrastructural Brutalism: Art and the Necropolitics of Infrastructure* (MIT Press, 2020) and co-editor with Ajamu Nangwaya of *Why Don't The Poor Rise Up? Organizing the Twenty-First Century Resistance* (AK Press, 2017).

11 - 12 PM      Lunch

12 - 1 PM

## Exilic Mysticism as a Fight Against Genocide

JESS LIPKA

In the wake of the Spanish inquisition and the Reconquista, exiled Jews in Safed flocked to the mystical movement of Isaac Luria. Luria expressed the mood of the Jewish world in the 16th century, crafting a theology based on God's withdrawal from the material world (*tzimtzum*) and Jewish exile (*galut*) from the divine. In this presentation I'll read the work of Isaac Luria for how it illuminates and makes sense of the exile from Spain, describing why the Lurianic Kabbalah became

popular in the 16th century. I argue that the concept of exile and *tiqqun* (repairing the world) can help to articulate a Jewish identity that rejects zionism and the nation state altogether. Ultimately, Luria points to the need to embrace an exilic Judaism as a part of the fight against genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine.

2 - 3 PM

## Mutual Aid Disaster Relief

JANY

The word Apocalypse in greek means revelation and unveiling, we are experiencing this in real time on an almost daily basis. This isn't a warning or an attempt to fear monger but instead a clarion call to remember that the powers that be are not coming but we have to and CAN care for each other in their place. These times bring with it the realization of the power of our own autonomy through mutual aid. In Dine the word for mutual aid and kin share roots. It is time for us to remember that we are all kin and treat each other as such.

Jany is a non-binary Cuban anarchist, lifespan doula, nurse, handy boi, disaster responder, peanut butter and jelly maker, and Titi to a gang of wildlings. Focusing on values that are innate to all of us—such as care, love, and nurturing others—Jany has spent the bulk of their life in one caregiver role or another and continues to do so by building lighthouses of care that are accessible to those seeking refuge and respite that function as nodes of support within a much larger web of community care. Jany is dedicated to supporting and nurturing queer, trans, neurodivergent, and generally oddball teens through their involvement in running a yearly summer camp focused on supporting teens with these identities and many others.



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4 - 5 PM

## Seeing Territory via Painting

KELSEY CAITLIN

A discussion of two modalities of carefully seeing locations, via “figurative” and “nonfigurative” painting. Painting, understood as a tactile record of looking and listening, enables us to see around, recontextualize and sometimes unravel one of states’ most critical pillars: unitary and hegemonic understanding of land. By looking closely and spending time with a site, we uncover several tools: heterogeneous perspectives on what has occurred in them, visions of indeterminate processes still unfolding, and rooted understanding of ourselves as dynamic components (rather than passive observers) of a place. This talk will emphasize the “negative space” present around and underneath the coherence and unity of land as asserted by the State, as a means for us to see other realities as they already exist.

To illustrate these processes I will be presenting several paintings, including paintings of places known as the Florida Canal in New Orleans during a 2024 spring flood, the Slaughter Canal non-state building project in Haiti in 2023, and two images of The Warren in Evansville while under construction in 2024. Nonfigurative painting entails a direct disassembly of narrative-centric perspectives, and draws heterogeneous relationality out of observers. By contrast, figuration requires us to radically abstract the legible landmarks seen in a place, and then reassemble them according to degrees of sensitivity and willingness to honor observable relationships. I believe both modalities can be used to see and hear the world as it is already not determined or determinable by any State, and that practices of painting can be one of many tools to expand this aspect of our environments.

Kelsey is a painter, parent and zine producer based in New Orleans. Their primary interest is in locations and various practices of being changed by them.

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5 - 6 PM Dinner

6 - 9 PM

## Film: Space of Exception (2018)

MATT PETERSON

Space of Exception, co-directed by Matt Peterson and Malek Rasamny, investigates and juxtaposes the struggles, communities, and spaces of the Palestinian refugee camp and the American Indian reservation. Space of Exception was shot over the course of three years in the West Bank and Lebanon, as well as in Arizona, New Mexico, New York, and South Dakota. The film is an attempt to understand the significance of the land—its memory and divisions—and the conditions for life, community, and sovereignty.

Spaces of Exception features interviews with members of the American Indian Movement, the Mohawk Warrior Society, and Diné families resisting displacement on Black Mesa, as well as Palestinian militant organizations based in the camps, alongside environmental activists, autonomous youth committees, and the families of political prisoners and martyrs.

Co-director Matt Peterson will be present for a Q&A after the screening. Matt Peterson is an organizer at Woodbine, an experimental space in New York City. He previously directed the documentary feature *Scenes from a Revolt Sustained* (2015), and co-edited the books *In the Name of the People* (2018) and *The Reservoir* (2022).

9 PM

Mood Music: Tent



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## Tours & Projects



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### Boxtown

The West downtown area of Evansville, on the western bend of the Ohio River where the Pigeon Creek enters, is the burrow Boxtown. The area has been called this because up into the 1950's there was a shantyboat community of squatters along the creek. At times over 100 shantyboats. A 94-year-old recounting stories of playing with other children in the Boxtown squats said he called them the Katzenjammer Kids, after one of the longest running comics, about two misbehaving children causing havoc. The broader area, before being annexed by the city of Evansville, was once referred to as Independence, and became one of the first illegally racially integrated areas of town. These factors contributed to its continual criminal culture and forced neglect in terms of both the city administration failing to design for the needs of the residents and over policing the ways in which the residents tend to their own needs. In the 1950's the city forced the removal of the squatter community with the police and fire departments burning down any remaining boat-homes.

## Hawthorn Housing Landtrust

In 2008 participants in anti-infrastructure movements purchased a house in the neighborhood to organize against eminent domain designated for the neighborhood and its corollary in land seized for the forced construction of the NAFTA SuperHighway, of which the nearby I-69 is a part. This initial house purchase expanded to at times 18 homes and over 20 separate garden lots. This initiative has evolved into a contemporary form as Hawthorn Housing Landtrust taking its name in part from the Hawthorn Archives which act as an archive of communities that “cause continuity problems, on top of already problematic fragmentation, repetition, and ill-fitting form, elusive, vague, secretive, places that emerge and recede in practical relationships with others...like, pirates and maroons.”



## New Harmony

Harmony was established first as a religious utopian settlement by the German millenarians, The Harmonists. They used a combination of both communal and dictatorial organization; both a collectivist labor model and an industrial capitalist colonialism. The property was later purchased by Robert Owen as a location for the socialist utopian project New Harmony. Owen's fortune came from the cotton mill industry, directly dependent on the slave trade. Josiah Warren, “the first American Anarchist” lived in the community as well as Robert Evans, the namesake of Evansville.

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+

*The hedge maze was used as a spiritual practice to ritually trace the path to an eternal center.*

+

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## Maroon Garden

*"In the new moon dark, a small child slipped, alone, through the iron gates of the Warren community garden...He moved stealthily between the deflated, wildish rows of leafy shadows, looking for anything familiar. He finally started pulling at everything he could touch until he found shapes he recognized..."*

—*Maroons: A Grievors Novel*, by adrienne maree brown (AK Press 2023)

Maroon Gardens is located on the border between "Uptown"—the Southside of Evansville where black and brown people escaping Southern slavery first established a community in Evansville, and what is currently the Historic District and the Arts District made up of the original colonial neighborhood and its renewal through "cultural expansion".

The garden is owned by the nonprofit Focus Initiative and maintained by its volunteers as an open social space continuing the traditions of escape into other forms of life.



MONDAY

## The Warren

The logo of The Warren is commissioned art by Alex CF, lead singer of the band Fall of Efrafa (FOE). FOE produced a trilogy of albums inspired by the novel *Watership Down* which depicts rabbits escaping captivity and seeking free and shared lives.

The design consists of native wild plants (Bull Thistle, Black eyed Susans, and Rose of Sharon) surrounding the bones of a rabbit at the opening of a network of burrows—or a warren.

These three plants represent the garden lots where wild native plants will be grown along with agricultural vegetables. Wildness tends to its bones. The dead stalks of plants become home to insects and microbes as they decay into the top soil of landscapes. Our project will care for the bones of bodies in decay: the bones of a building constructed in 1909, the bones of impoverished populations picked bare by being segregated to “social death”, the bones of scattered histories of collective escape and shared lives.

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Warren is also the name of a person from the local “scattered history” of Evansville. Josiah Warren was a resident of New Harmony and often referred to as “the first American Anarchist”. He was an inventor and artisan, a musician and social philosopher. Warren helped connect a sort of warren in his own life time by founding five “utopian communities” as well as a series of “Time Stores” that functioned via labor exchange and alternative currency.

#### THE WARREN IS A NETWORK:

A decompression space above The Warren will be managed by the nonprofit Focus Initiative for those members of ASC working to stabilize communities impacted by incarceration and other forms of marginalizations.

<https://www.focusreentry.com/>

Autonomous Spaces Cooperative (ASC) will maintain a mutual aid hub and social space for gatherings.

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The Evansville based Haitian solidarity group Haitians in Evansville for Redress of Emancipation (H.E.R.E.) will maintain Vlangbendeng Fore Jaden in the adjacent lots on the property and organizing for support of Haitian autonomy here and in Haiti.

*“The hoe is one of the principal tools with which early Haitian farmers carved their living from remote hillsides, but the hoe dangled in the hand and played with a metal rod is also an important musical instrument...From the percussive, metallic ringing of this typical Haitian instrument comes the onomatopoeic name of another [insurrectionary emancipatory] secret society, Vlangbendeng.”*

—Maroon Nation, by John Henry Gonzalez (Yale University Press 2019)

Two city lots contiguous to The Warren, act as Vlangbendeng Fore Jaden (forest garden) in solidarity with those still in Haiti.





MONDAY

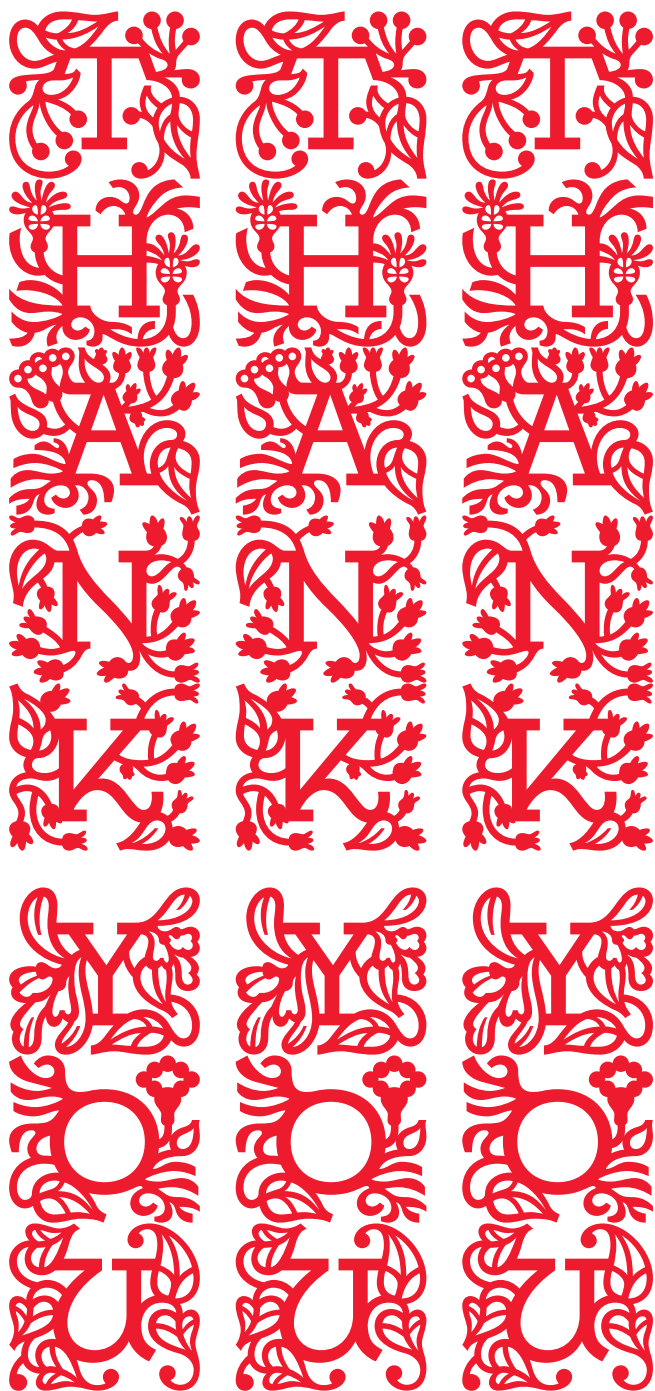
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“ ‘Gone to ground: of a fox or other animal to enter its earth or burrow. As in; rabbits evicted from one set of burrows will go to ground elsewhere.’...’plants are ground thoughts because soil cant move itself, ground as a site for thinking, plants signaling intelligence, sentient soil moved along by the force of life...going to ground demands a [anti-colonial] politics ‘verging on the vegetal’...”

GONE TO GROUND, VANESSA AGARD JONES





# NOTE

# CONTENTS



*As we consider the content of these discussions, let us keep in mind and at hand that we are contemplating "alternative lives we could be living and that at smaller scales many of us already do."*

*—Avery Gordon*

